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ABSTRACT

Although stimulating genuine mentoring among teachers is not an easy process, mentoring is vital to the teaching profession. Essential elements of mentoring identified through research include socialization, individual adjustment, and nurturing. Young teachers need help in entering the profession and they also need role models and counselors throughout their careers. These needs coincide with the needs of experienced teachers to nurture and find meaning in their careers. Though routine in business, mentoring is still awkward in the teaching profession. Compartmentalization, age disparities, job dissatisfaction, and powerlessness restrict mentoring. Research shows that efforts such as improving communication, involving experienced teachers, and mentor training can bring about changes that benefit both new and experienced teachers. (CB)

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Mentoring in Teaching

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Much has been written about the development of an individual's intellect and personality. The importance of early childhood experiences has been detailed. Personality and intellect continue to change in adulthood, however, and organizations thrive or decline as a result of their management of these changes. Gould (1972), Neugarten (1968), Havighurst (1972), and Levinson (1978) have all documented a mentoring phenomenon, a nurturing relationship between pairs of adults. Sheehy (1976) popularized the idea in the late 1970's. Since then, various authors have described mentoring in different kinds of companies, in the lives of women, for minority professionals, and among teachers. As a result of this work, a significant problem has been revealed. Mentoring, essential to adult cognitive and affective development, is sharply restricted within the teaching profession.

Mentoring helps individual adjustment in two ways. The young adult is helped to settle into the profession, and the person coming out of the mid-life transition at about age forty-five is helped to "become his own man" as Levinson calls it or achieve "generativity rather than stagnation," in Erik Erikson's terms. The period when a person seeks a mentor is described by the authors as "early adulthood" (ages 20-35). When a person's equilibrium is disrupted, intense coping efforts and heightened activity follow, leading to a new equilibrium. Whether the new equilibrium is established at an improved or diminished career position often depends on his/her interactions with others during the transition.

When a young adult enters an organization, a mentor is sometimes assigned. More often, the relationship emerges. Meryl Reis Louis (1980) has provided a model of the newcomer experience which focuses on three perceptions: change, contrast, and surprise. The adjustments which a newcomer must make tend to be bewildering. As Louis puts it:

> We can generally expect a transition from school to a first full-time, career related job to be accompanied by more changes and, therefore, more to cope with than a transition from one work organization to another, especially when the new job is similar to the old one. (p. 23)

The new teacher has to learn to live a different life. In order to become comfortable within a school faculty, he/she must understand the expectations, the structure, and the cliques of the school. In Louis' model, "change" is defined as a difference in a major feature between new and old settings. Such differences include addresses, telephone numbers, titles, salaries, job descriptions, hours, and many other characteristics. "Contrast" refers to differences that are personally noticed. These differences cannot be predicted because they emerge in the person's consciousness as insights which others in the organization may not share. For example, a teacher may feel a contrast between the humanitarian impulses leading him/her into teaching and the bureaucratic operation of a large school. "Surprise" refers to differences between what the person thought the job was going to be and what it turns out to be.

In most organizations, the socialization through which the new member accepts these differences is gradual. This is not the case with teachers. The Conant Report (1963) called attention to the difficult adjustment required of new teachers. Galvez-Hjornevik (1985) reported the fear new teachers felt that the standard of competence was performance equal to experienced teachers. Teachers were expected to assume all of the responsibilities of the profession immediately. New teachers felt cut off from any help. They were reluctant to admit to any problems. Louis says that newcomers make sense of the change, contrast, and surprise experiences through their interactions with other members. A mentor, both trusted friend and respected role model, helps settle the questions "Will I like this life?" and "Will I be good at it?"

Four powerful forces now work to undermine mentoring in teaching. First, there is a compartmentalization in schools. Says Goodlad in A Place Called School (1984): "The classroom cells in which teachers spend much of their time appear to be symbolic and predictive of their relative isolation from one another and from sources of ideas beyond their own background of experiences." Second, the level of dissatisfaction with the teaching career is too high. Unlike business executives, teachers have "nowhere to go," and loss of energy with age can make teachers less, rather than more, successful over time. The Report of the Governor's Commission on Excellence for November,

1986, says: "In Virginia, almost half of the teachers say that if they had it to do over, they would not choose teaching again." If the mentor's crucial role is providing "vision to create the future," as Hickman and Silva (1984) describe it, where will this vision come from?

A third problem is that the mentor in teaching controls neither the flow of "inside" information to the young teacher nor the teacher's work assignments. These two powers are strong elements of mentoring in business. In The Mentor Connection, (Zey, 1984) a number of successful executives describe their mentor's help in those two areas. Barbara Sikorsky, Product Manager at Goodbrand Corporation, describes how after she had surgery, her mentor "covertly" allowed her time off as needed during her recovery. The mentor's compassion, coupled with the power to help, sealed her close relationship with Barbara. This story is typical of the business mentor's use of power to help the young executive. In return, mentors in business find their influence within the organization greatly increased by the rise of their protégés to high positions. Among teachers, the lack of power precludes these mutually beneficial relationships.

Certainly teachers can help one another. Covering classes in emergencies, sharing ideas for bulletin boards or lessons, expressing praise of one another, and supporting each other's projects (plays, bake sales, sports) are all common. Yet there are severe restrictions on their promotion of each other's careers.

Finally, America's teachers are graying. In most organizations, workers grow older in the company of younger workers who arrive at frequent intervals. In many schools, there have been few young people hired in recent years. Particularly in the Northeast, where there are huge teacher surpluses, experienced teachers fill most vacancies, especially in the high schools. Mentoring results from the needs of people at two stages of life, a need to find meaning and a need to share it. In the aging teacher force of the 1980's, the barriers between youth and experience are rising. Ducharme and Kluender (1986) report this comment from a teacher:

> For years I thought it was great to be in the company of the young. You know, the old expression about staying young by being with the young. But now I don't know. They are so young, and I'm beginning to feel old. (p. 45)

Socializing and nurturing relationships come in many forms. Schein (1978) noted that the term, mentor, is used to mean "teacher, coach, trainer, positive role model, developer of talent, opener of doors, protector, sponsor, and sccessful leader." Schein says that the term really applies only to people who play several of those roles. Levinson (1978) says that mentoring is a matching of two personalities at particular life stages. This match promotes the careers of both individuals by meeting needs they have in their work lives. Thus, much of what has been said about mentoring really describes coaching. It is an error to say that because mentoring helps the careers of young adults,

any program which helps the career of young adults is mentoring.

This view of mentoring excludes most of the current induction programs as mentoring programs. In response to research showing teachers, especially beginning teachers, feeling isolated and deprived of colleague coaching and support, states have created induction programs. Virginia's Beginning Teacher Assistance Program (BTAP) states two goals. The first is to ensure that teachers can demonstrate basic competencies. "The second goal has been the development of close, supportive relationships between experienced teachers or mentors and beginning teachers." (The Colleague Teacher Project Brochure) This goal statement shows "stretching" of the mentoring concept, as noted above. Since the brochure goes on to say that "schools must find ways of promoting interaction among teachers concerning the practice of teaching," and that "all teachers must be given increased opportunities to observe others teaching"--it is clear that the emphasis is on coaching rather than mentoring. This aspect of BTAP is likely to be very helpful to teachers. The danger is in the notion that nurturing relationships can be contrived in such a way as to build in, or make unnecessary, mentoring among teachers.

In California's Mentor Teacher Program 5,100 teachers have been selected to be paid $4,000 each to serve as mentors to new teachers. Paid these sizeable stipends and appointed for one, two, or three year terms--these teachers are expected to build powerful nurturing relationships based on trust. Thankfully,

the mentors are not expected to do this and help with evaluation of the new teachers. Such programs have small foundations in research. Says Laura A. Wagner, "Interestingly, although the teaching of adults is central to the legislated description of the mentoring role, neither knowledge of adult learning theory nor possession of adult training and coaching skills is included in the criteria for selection of mentor teachers." (1985, p. 25)

Galvez-Hjornevik (1986) asks whether mentoring exists among schoolteachers. She cites a study by Gehrke and Kay (1984) in which 111 out of 188 indicated knowing a person who had "helped, guided, or sponsored them" in teaching (p. 7). Only 41 claimed to have had a mentor in a comprehensive sense, and only three of these said the mentor was a co-worker. The study further showed that few of the interviewed teachers were mentors for other teachers.

Judy Arin Krupp (1984) conducted workshops on fostering mentoring relationships. She reports in "Mentor and Protégé Perceptions of Mentoring Relationships in Elementary and Secondary Schools in Connecticut" that the workshops caused experienced teachers to draw a connection between their sense of self-worth and their role in helping young teachers. These workshops facilitated the mentoring process by providing training in communication skills and by providing opportunities for teachers to pair up. These needs are highlighted by the following comment by Bruce Joyce (speaking in Norfolk, October 13, 1986):

> Young teachers don't know enough people in the school to find a mentor. In industry, people know each other better than in schools, with deeper relationships. And they have better skills. At Hewlett Packard, people were able to get to know each other and to know me in a real hurry. They had the people skills!

The central theme in Joyce's books has been the isolation of individual teachers and the resulting failure of teachers to develop a repertoire of effective teaching strategies. Lortie (1975) calls this the weakness of teaching as a subculture. When mentoring takes place, two individuals attempt to fulfill their needs through their work. There is a perception of competence, even excellence, that one has achieved and of which the other is worthy. Psychological forces are marshalled to overcome isolation. Choosing a mentor is an act of faith. Many young teachers withold that faith from their colleagues. <u>They look to principals or college professors for a vision of excellence.</u> Few young teachers say that their ultimate goal is to become like the older teacher down the hall.

Weber (1980) described mentoring as combining elements of parent-child love and peer friendship yet having unique elements of its own. What can be done to stimulate such relationships among teachers? The research focuses us on the first year of teaching. The Conant Report, the work of Schein, the work of Levinson, and many other studies have defined the first year problems. Anecdotal accounts such as Ryan's <u>Don't Smile Until Christmas</u> (1970) provide further confirmation for the need for mentoring opportunities starting in the first year.

Though mentoring is instrumental in bringing first year teachers into the profession, it is not a single year phenomenon. It goes through a series of phases. These are, according to Kram (1983):

> The initiation stage during which time the relationship is started; a cultivation phase, during which time the range of functions provided expands to maximum; a separation phase, during which time the established nature of the relationship is substantially altered by structural change in the organizational context and/or by psychological changes with one or both individuals; and a redefinition stage, during which time the relationship evolves a new form that is significantly different from the past, or the relationship ends entirely. (p.614)

The skills and attitudes needed are the same for each stage. Intensive staff development in communication skills and organizational psychology can facilitate mentoring. The young teacher can learn to ask, "What are my needs?" and "Who can help me?" Mentor and protégé do not need to share a wide range of interests or have the same sense of humor. They do need to listen to each other. Says Zey (1984):

> The success of the relationship depends in large part on the ability of the protégé to learn. The protégé must be a good listener and observer and must come to realize that being on the receiving end of the mentor's advice and instruction is not a sign of ignorance but a gateway to essential knowledge and eventual success. (p. 15)

Mentors can learn how to help, but the training must involve practice along with theories of counseling and leadership.

Training which starts with theory and demonstration, moves to simulations for practice, and then provides potential mentors with leadership opportunities attacking school problems can "create" mentors. Simply giving people the title and a stipend will not. When leadership is displayed, young teachers find mentors. When experienced teachers are excluded from school leadership, they teach new teachers cynicism, disillusionment, and reticence.

Stimulating genuine mentoring among teachers will not be easy, but mentoring is vital to the profession. The essential elements of mentoring have been identified through research. Young teachers need help in entering the profession, and they also need role models and counselors throughout their careers. These needs coincide with the needs of experienced teachers to nurture and find meaning. Though mentoring is routine in business, it is awkward in teaching. Compartmentalization, age disparities, dissatisfaction, and powerlessness restrict mentoring. As part of a broad effort to improve teaching as a career, new initiatives are being taken to improve communication among teachers and increase cooperative efforts in schools. The research shows that these efforts can bring about changes that benefit both new and experienced teachers.

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